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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TOKYO 001755

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KN](#) [JA](#)
SUBJECT: ABE, YAMASAKI SPAR OVER DPRK POLICY

REF: A. TOKYO 1743 - MEDIA CRITICIZES MOVES ON DPRK
[1](#)B. TOKYO 1741 - ABDUCTEE FAMILIES SEEK ATTENTION
[1](#)C. TOKYO 1737 - FUKUDA: NO GAP WITH U.S. ON DELISTING
[1](#)D. TOKYO 1675 - YAMASAKI SUPPORTS LIFTING SANCTIONS
[1](#)E. TOKYO 0781 - SUPRAPARTISAN LEAGUES PROLIFERATE

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Classified By: DCM Joe Donovan, reasons 1.4(b),(d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: The war of words between rival Diet groups on both sides of the DPRK issue is heating up again. Former LDP Vice President Taku Yamasaki is pitted against former Prime Minister Abe; both are joined by several dozen like-minded Diet members. Days after the June 13 announcement that Japan and the DPRK had reached an agreement at bilateral talks in Beijing, both ruling and opposition party lawmakers began to speak out over the deal. Most, including Abe and other conservative hard-liners, have criticized Prime Minister Fukuda for his seeming willingness to lift Japan's unilateral sanctions even before the DPRK has made "concrete progress" on its pledge to reinvestigate the abductions issue. A few, including Yamasaki, have praised the agreement for reinvigorating bilateral dialogue and contributing to resolution of the nuclear issue. Japanese media have reported that there is a growing gap within the ruling party over the government's decision. At this point, the views of Fukuda are closer to Yamasaki than to Abe. End Summary.

LDP Split Over Approach to DPRK

[1](#)2. (C) In a speech at a political fundraiser on June 18, Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe accused 12-term Lower House member Taku Yamasaki and his roughly 40-member supra-partisan Diet League of acting "without regard to the national interest," saying they had weakened the government's negotiating position by calling publicly for lifting sanctions against the DPRK. Speaking the following week at a meeting of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) special committee on abductions, Abe warned that the U.S.-Japan alliance "might be negatively affected" if the United States delists the DPRK before the abduction issue is resolved. Other LDP lawmakers attending the meeting called the U.S. approach "too conciliatory," and LDP Secretary General Bunmei Ibuki accused the United States of "lowering the bar" on the nuclear issue at a press conference later that day. LDP Diet member Koichi Hagiuda acknowledged recently that the LDP is not united in its opinion on the U.S. decision to delist, but insisted that Abe's opinion, not Yamasaki's, represents the majority. With his June 24

statement in support of the U.S. decision to begin the process of delisting the DPRK (Ref C), however, Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda has clearly staked a position close to that of Yamasaki and his group.

13. (C) The LDP has long been split over North Korea policy: One group, represented by conservatives, such as Takeo Hiranuma, Abe, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister for Abductions Kyoko Nakayama, and former Policy Affairs Research Council Chair Shoichi Nakagawa, has focused on resolving the abductions issue; the other, represented by Yamasaki, focused on resolving the nuclear issue. Just over a year ago, faced with Washington's decision to partially lift financial sanctions imposed on Banco Delta Asia, then-Prime Minister Abe publicly accepted the move, but maintained a hard line on abductions. Nakagawa supported Abe's refusal to provide energy assistance "unless the nuclear programs are all scrapped and the abduction issues is resolved." Yamasaki welcomed renewed U.S.-DRPK dialogue and urged Japan to take a "flexible" stance on abductions, or else risk "missing the bus." He reminded his colleagues and the public at the time that "Japan will benefit the most from denuclearization."

14. (C) Just 18 months ago, Yamasaki seemed to be tilting at windmills, as Abe and his inner circle turned a deaf ear to a report on his January 2007 meetings with DPRK officials in Pyongyang. Yamasaki had been publicly humiliated a few months earlier over revelations that he had fabricated a story regarding a planned third visit to Pyongyang by former Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in December 2006. Earlier this year, when Yamasaki was considering a visit to Pyongyang, Chief Cabinet Secretary Machimura reacted negatively, saying that "we are not in a situation where diplomacy led by Diet members can be developed."

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Nevertheless, Fukuda has publicly acknowledged his respect for Yamasaki's expertise on North Korea, and Yamasaki has told the Embassy he believes that his views are in sync with Fukuda's.

"Liberal" Yamasaki Focuses on Normalization

15. (C) Yamasaki's supra-partisan Parliamentary League to Promote Diplomatic Normalization Between Japan and North Korea, founded in May 2008, places priority on realizing resolution of the nuclear issue through dialogue. The League incorporates elements of the supra-partisan Diet League for Research on Korean Peninsula Issues, founded just a few months earlier by opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) International Bureau Director Tetsundo Iwakuni. Together, they promote deeper exchanges between parliamentarians and government officials from Japan and the DPRK, and plan to visit Pyongyang after the completion of all Second Phase commitments to gain concessions on abductions while the 45-day clock runs on the delisting process. Junior coalition partner Komeito's Junji Higashi told the Embassy recently that the group's purpose is to back up the government and serve as a "pilot" when government-to-government contact slows. Yamasaki's League receives support from former LDP Secretary General Koichi Kato's Asia Diplomacy and Security Vision Research Council, a study group founded in early 2007 and organized around the principles of improving Japan's relations with its Asian neighbors. Kato's group was harshly critical of then-Prime Minister Abe for treating the nuclear and abductions issues as a set.

16. (C) On June 17, Yamasaki and his Diet League presented a declaration (Ref D) calling on the government to "comprehensively settle the nuclear, missile and abduction issues and aim at normalization." The declaration warned that "sanctions by Japan could be an impediment" to final phase discussions at the Six-Party Talks, leaving Japan as the only party unable to implement relevant pledges and

commitments, such as provision of economic and energy assistance. Deepening conflict between Japan and the DPRK, it went on, could also lessen the likelihood of "positive progress toward the settlement of the abductions issue." Yamasaki stressed to reporters on June 14 the importance of setting a schedule for the reinvestigation. He indicated his interest in settling the abductions issue prior to the U.S. presidential election in November. He has expressed to the Embassy his concern that the abductions issue will hinder progress on nuclear and missile issues. Opposition DPJ lawmaker and League member Yoshihiro Kawakami, reputed author of the June 17 declaration, restated to the Embassy recently the League's position that normalization should come first and that abductions should be dealt with separately as a humanitarian issue.

"Conservative" Abe and Hiranuma Take a Stand on Abductions

17. (C) On the more conservative side of the equation, the supra-partisan Parliamentary League for Repatriation of Japanese Abductees ("Rachi Giren"), founded in 2002 by Independent Takeo Hiranuma (formerly of the LDP), regards resolution of the abductions issue as a pre-condition for progress on all other issues. Rachi Giren works in concert with the LDP Group to Cautiously Pursue Diplomacy with North Korea, founded on the same day as Yamasaki's Diet league by former Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Hakubun Shimomura. The LDP group includes former Prime Minister Abe, who also serves as an advisor to the Hiranuma group. Both groups maintain close contact with abductee family and support associations (Ref B). Shimomura reaffirmed to the Embassy recently that the policy stance adopted by then Prime Minister Abe remains the most effective means for dealing with the DPRK, and dismissed the need for "Diet diplomacy" on multiple tracks.

18. (C) Rachi Giren joined with abductee family groups to present its own "urgent" petition to Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura on June 17, urging the government to explain the shift in policy away from a hard line on abductions and to do its best to prevent the United States from delisting before the DPRK takes concrete actions aimed at a return of all Japanese abductees. The petition,

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delivered by conservative Upper House lawmaker Ichita Yamamoto, also called on the government not to ease sanctions until the DPRK reinvestigates the fate of the abductees, and to impose additional sanctions if the DPRK fails to act on his promise to reopen the investigation. Abe has said he is reluctant to trust the results of any DPRK reinvestigation into the fate of Japan's abductees. If anything, he said, Japan should be "raising its guard" toward the DPRK, not taking a more conciliatory stance. The LDP's Hagiuda, who is firmly in the Abe and Hiranuma camp, complained to the Embassy that pro-U.S. conservative LDP members had worked very hard to keep the Self-Defense Forces in Iraq and the Indian Ocean, and felt betrayed by delisting.

Whispers of Political Realignment Follow Diet Leagues

19. (C) The media last year focused a great deal of attention on the proliferation of supra-partisan Diet leagues as political tools for promoting a more ideologically-oriented realignment of the current political parties (Ref E). That reporting has mostly died down with respect to the Korean Peninsula-related groups, as the talks with the DPRK have heated up again. That didn't stop DPJ member Hiroshi Nakai, a member of Hiranuma's conservative anti-normalization League, from pointing out a whole series of domestic political considerations, from Yamasaki ally Tetsundo Iwakuni's hometown interest in the fishery trade, to contacts between pro-normalization politicians and officials from

Chosen Soren, the unofficial DPRK representative in Japan. Even Yamasaki himself, Nakai claimed, is only working DPRK issues in hopes of reviving his dying political career. DPJ number two Naoto Kan only joined Yamasaki's group to smooth relations with the small People's New Party, which maintains a voting bloc with the DPJ in the opposition-controlled Upper House, Nakai asserted.

¶10. (C) The DPJ's Kawakami confided to the Embassy recently that DPJ leader Ozawa had blessed his participation in the supra-partisan League, saying "it is good to do what the government cannot do," with the added admonition that he "not do anything that would give credit to the government." He also offered privately that Yamasaki's channels of communication with the DPRK have narrowed recently and that he no longer has the trust of DPRK officials. The DPRK knows that Yamasaki is only interested in Korean Peninsula issues from the standpoint of increasing his currency at home, he claimed, lending some credence to the fact that these Diet Leagues may have been intended, at least partly, to further domestic political interests. They trust Kawakami, he asserted, because he has worked these issues on behalf of his constituency in Tottori, which has the only sister-city relationship with the DPRK and would like to build direct air connections.
SCHIEFFER